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## **DPJ Opposition to Refuelling Operations Lacks Reason**

**By UCHIDA Tadao**

The prospects for the bill to allow the continuation of refuelling activities in the Indian Ocean by the Maritime Self-Defence Forces (MSDF) passing in this Diet session appear bleak. Besides a mistake being made over the amount of fuel supplied four years ago, and the discovery that the MSDF covered up the error, it has also come to light that former Defence Vice-Minister Takemasa MORIYA may have been entertained at the golf course by a defence industry company. Because the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) wants these issues resolved first, of course debate on the bill cannot proceed.

Under the circumstances, the refuelling activities by the MSDF cannot but be temporarily suspended under the Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law which expires on November 1, but the passing of any new law is likely to be so severely delayed that prospects for re-starting the activities are uncertain. Leaving aside the other opposition parties, I really cannot understand why the DPJ opposes the refuelling. OZAWA Ichiro's call to participate in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is even more unfathomable. According to normal reasoning in an age where the international community is working together to prevent global terrorism, the refuelling activities to support multi-national naval forces in maritime terrorism prevention efforts is the most appropriate action we can take under the Constitutional restraints.

While the refuelling vessels are accompanied by convoys, the chances of becoming caught up in a conflict are virtually non-existent. The chances of being forced into a battle while participating in ISAF are much higher as its main duties are to preserve the peace and support people's livelihoods. Mr. OZAWA says ISAF is clearly under the prerogative of a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution while the refuelling activities are not backed up by this authority, but in broad terms it is not such a stretch to say that maritime anti-terror activities are in line with UNSC objectives.

The real motive of the DPJ in opposing the refuelling activities is to make the most of its differences with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) over the issue in view of the coming election of the House of Councillors. At any rate, the prestige of the nation ought not to be hurt by opposing an

institution attempting to respond to the requests of the international community through the tactic of debating a mountain of pending issues with the LDP. If the DPJ aims to overthrow the cabinet on foreign policy, they had better cross swords over an issue of more vital interest.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. UCHIDA Tadao, Professor of Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, which originally appeared on the BBS “Hyakka-Seiho” of JFIR on October 23, 2007.)**